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HOSPITAL AND TRAINING SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

HOW CAN WE BEST DEVELOP EXECUTIVES IN OUR HOSPITALS?

BY ALICE SHEPARD GILMAN, R.N.

This question appears to me to demand more prominence now than at any other time in nursing history, due to the contingencies following war and the extreme dearth of executive people, in order to maintain our hospitals at a standard of efficiency.

We must turn to our student body to supply this need to a much larger degree than formerly, during their third year of training; how can we best develop them to assume this responsibility?

It is safe to say we cannot begin too early in their course to select the most promising material, the individual who possesses the characteristics which qualify her for certain lines of work, who should be developed along those lines whenever possible. The placing of responsibility, and developing a sense of high standards are factors which aid materially in bringing about a better condition in our schools of nursing.

Proper and constant supervision during the student's first year in the hospital is primarily important; extreme stress must be put upon this point, as after this time habits are very well established.

In the preliminary term, the students must work according to a system, accurately, promptly and intelligently. Equipment provided should be in accordance with that used in the wards; that is to say, an elaborate demonstration room is not in keeping with the ward whose equipment is not adequate for the amount of work done. Not only should the demonstration room be well equipped, but the ward correspondingly so.

It is most important to establish correct habits in the young student, which may be carried over into her practical work. We cannot expect to develop executives when those factors which stimulate the ability are disregarded in the surroundings. Every ward in a hospital should be up to the standard in equipment, so that time and energy will not be wasted in learning where things are kept and what the individual equipment is, for each ward. This should be taught once in the class room, and when the student goes to the hospital, she should be thoroughly acquainted with the equipment and know where she may expect to find it.

Follow-up work on the wards is a point to be emphasized, for it is absolutely necessary in order to get lasting results. When the probationer goes on to the wards during the day, a supervisor should make a continuous round to supervise and observe the manner of the work done.

You will hear the complaint from head nurses, that they never know when the probationer is to arrive or how long she is to stay. This may be overcome by issuing to each student a time-card, recording upon it the hours of the day she will be on the wards for each day in the week. This is given to the head nurse on Monday morning and leaves the ward only as the probationer leaves for another ward, later in the course, when it is passed on to the next head nurse: This system makes it possible for a definite routine of duties to be listed for each probationer and left on the desk each morning. As the probationer finishes those duties she checks them, and the supervisor on coming to the ward consults these cards and immediately checks up the work done. If the supervision is not regularly carried on, the morale of the teaching methods deteriorates and is not a permanently established fact. It is an important step towards the development of good executives, to insist upon the firm establishment of habits, which make for attention to detail and finished work.

Uniform standardized duties should exist in every ward. This develops responsibility. If the student feels that she has a definite number of patients to be responsible for and certain ward duties which are solely hers, she will take a greater amount of pride and interest in the completion of her duties. Responsibility may be developed in this way early in the course and maintained through its duration. Head nurses who cannot assume responsibility are of very little use as executives, or teachers, to those under them.

A system which enables a supervisor to immediately check up the individual's work on the ward each day is most necessary, as well as desirable, also a slip which provides an opportunity for the head nurse to make a fair detailed report of each student's personality as well as her professional fitness. If these reports are given prompt attention and the individual is appealed to and shown where she is not rendering satisfactory service, much can be done to develop the better characteristics in the student, which might have gone uncorrected.

The development of high ideals demands individual attention. Head nurses' classes aid very much in cementing the individuals of a school together and promoting higher standards. They give the student nurse a better opportunity to get the viewpoint of the administration and to work in sympathy with its policies; a spirit of coöperation is stimulated through closer association. There are countless details which arise needing only slight adjustment, as well as more weighty problems, which can at this time be discussed with the superintendent. The student nurse in charge of a ward invariably feels she is a part of the administration, and if she has any ability at all, unconsciously assumes a responsibility for those under her. These

classes also give opportunity for discussion of changes in technique so that every head nurse may be conversant with every teaching method in vogue in the institution.

A good practical instructor is a most important asset to the development of good executives. You cannot have your practice taught in a slipshod manner and expect that your students will have the least respect for details. Definite procedures should be taught in the classroom, at least two ways should be demonstrated and practiced for each procedure, if possible. Every detail should be carried out with precision and with as much speed as is expedient, individual attention being given to the practice work, which is most important.

Improvising should not be disregarded, as in small hospitals and in district nursing, the elaborate equipment of the modern hospital is not existent and nurses must know in some degree how to use intelligently the facilities which are available. This should occupy a few hours of the class-room instruction. I do maintain, however, that in an institution which can afford an up-to-date equipment, there should be such an one, because a hospital must be run on the same lines as a business, in order to be of the greatest service to the community. We do not find a business in the first class run on obsolete methods or with insufficient equipment. The slogan to-day is saving of time and energy, and why should this not be carried over into the modern hospital? The only difference being through the dividend. In the business it is a financial profit, in the hospital, it is the service rendered to humanity. There is not much use in putting in a standardized equipment unless it is accounted for every week or month, and shortage made up. All breakage and loss must be paid for by the person who is responsible for it.

Another plan which must be taken into consideration in developing the executive is the attention given the individual, the opportunities afforded her to develop. If she has initiative, originality, energy and enthusiasm, let her expend it; guide her efforts judiciously and strive to keep her from the pitfalls, but let her blaze her trail, give expression to her individuality in her work. Do not kill the personal expression in developing a system.

Senior students should be placed in positions where they can try their wings and ascertain how strong they are before going into the professional world to make their way. If they present good ideas, act upon them and show your appreciation of their desire to improve the facilities of the hospital. There are many departments where they may be used as assistants and with careful supervision prove very useful members of the hospital staff. Attention to this individuality should be paid each class as it enters, and individuals watched care-

fully to ascertain in what lines of work they are most efficient. This depends, to a large degree, on the natural trend of the particular personality. They must first express a liking for a certain part of their training. In this department they can be made to develop a greater responsibility, owing to their desire to succeed in the thing which they believe themselves most suited for. Having developed a sense of responsibility, it will to a greater or less degree, be carried over into other departments throughout their training. After their services are finished, then bring them back into the department where they have done their very best, and use them as assistants. This applies only to the most promising material, as such a measure could be carried out only where there is unusual ability shown, but nevertheless it stimulates a competition which materially reacts upon the whole school.

Second assistants in the training school office, assistant practical instructor, assistant operating room nurse, assistant to chief nurse in maternity department, are all positions which can be filled from the senior class. The development of a broader vision is obtained in this way, and when they have finished, it is possible for them to be of great service to you or wherever they may go to carry on this great profession. They know the ropes and do not need the preliminary drill which is so exhausting when taking in an absolutely inexperienced assistant.

No department is better than its head and no student nurse develops beyond the degree of proficiency which her superior officer represents. Get the best people you can find for every piece of work to be done, compensate them liberally, make them happy and contented, and give them every encouragement to develop their department to its highest efficiency.

All departments must balance well, for "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link." One poorly-run ward imperils the morale of the entire institution. It has never seemed to me the wisest thing to depend entirely upon one's graduates to fill the executive positions of an institution. Outside blood is good for any place and makes for the stronger construction, provided it be the right kind of blood. This does not mean isolated procedures and methods throughout an institution, but an amalgamation of the best methods in the construction of a uniform whole. We must change our methods and modify them continually. It is our duty as heads of training schools, to put forth all our initiative and energy in our efforts to develop the student nurse as an executive and make her not only valuable to herself, but to the hospital, and greatest of all, to the community.